

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:434
ANSWERED ON:25.04.2000
TREATMENT OF AIDS PATIENTS
V. SAROJA

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the poor people and especially, people below poverty line have been affected with AIDS in large number in comparison to well-to-do people;
- (b) whether the treatment for AIDS is quite costly;
- (c) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto; and
- (d) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to reduce the prices of medicines required for treatment of AIDS or to supply them free of cost or at reduced rates?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE)

(SHRI N.T. SHANMUGAM)

- (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the Lok Sabha.

STATEMENT REFERRED IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 434 TO BE ANSWERED ON 25-4-2000

(a) to (d) HIV transmission is mainly due to the sexual behaviour of a person and is not based on socio-economic consideration. However, due to low level of literacy among people belonging to lower socio-economic strata, access to HIV/AIDS related information and understanding is limited amongst them. Besides, poverty leads to sexual exploitation leading to increased risk of acquiring HIV infection. Moreover, Health Care Services are not easily accessible as well as affordable to them. Even though the opportunistic infections arising out of HIV, like Tuberculosis, Meningitis, Pneumonia etc. are curable. There is no recognized cure for HIV/AIDS. However, there are certain drugs called 'Antiretrovirals,' drugs which can delay the progression of HIV infection to full blown AIDS. These drugs are not manufactured in India and are thus very costly. The antiretroviral drugs include a combination of 2 to 3 medicines, which are to be taken 3 to 4 times every day, life long. These drugs are also toxic, and the compliance is poor due to which there is risk of developing resistance. It is the policy of the Government to provide free drugs for treatment of opportunistic infections associated with HIV/AIDS in all Government hospitals. To reduce the cost of antiretroviral drugs, government provides custom duty exemption for import of these drugs as life saving drugs. Government is also encouraging the local pharmaceutical companies to manufacture these drugs in India. Government is not considering supply of these drugs at reduced rates or free of cost under the National Programme.